

A
Serious and Humble Address
TO THE
Archbishops and Bishops
OF
I R E L A N D,

WHEREIN

The Causes of that Contempt and Scorn the
CLERGY and *RELIGION* Groan under, are
enquired into, and an Effectual Way is Proposed for
the Preventing it for the Future :

And with some ALLOWANCES may Serve
FOR THE
Meridian of ENGLAND.

*Inferiorum ordinum Culpa, ad nullos Magis referenda sunt quam ad desides
negligentesq; rectores, qui multam saepe, nutriunt pestilentiam, dum necessariam
dissimulant adhibere medicinam.*

St. Leo. Epist. tertia.

LONDON, Printed in the Year 1705.

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The Introduction.

My Lords,

BEfore the Author thinks fit to Venture on the design'd Address, he desires to make one Request to your Lordships; That if your Lordships find any Uneasiness or Trouble in your Consciences at what shall be offer'd in the following Papers, you may not take it in ill Part, but consider with your Selves whether it be not Truth, rather than the Author, which pinches so close, and wou'd willingly make room for it self to enter into those tender Parts; and so your Lordships, being of good and easie Constitutions are apt to winch at the Probing so tender a Wound: For I assure your Lordships, the Author is so very far from being an Enemy either to the Church, or the Order of Episcopacy, that he is an entire Friend to both, and wou'd willingly Sacrifice whatever is most dear and valuable to him, for their Preservation: He gives this Instance as an ample Proof of his Assertion, not that he thinks your Lordships will Hang or Draw him for speaking the Truth; but that you might be something peevish at the first awaking of your Consciences; and for that Reason he has thought it Convenient to keep awhile out of the Way, and has wisely conceal'd his Name: well remembring that nothing does a Man more Mischief than Plain-Dealing: For St. Paul himself, as great an Apostle as he was, yet by the Galatians was esteem'd an Enemy, for telling them the Truth; And our Blessed Saviour fared but little better among the Jews: and the Author assures your Lordships, that you will not meet with very many Instances

The Introduction.

ces of Court-Policy, but abundance of Honesty and Truth in the following Lines.

I am not of those Men's Mind, who are presently for laying aside the Institution because some Abuses have crept into it; for at that rate all wou'd be Confusion, all Enthusiasm: No, this is very far from the Author's Design: he wou'd have the Abuses indeed remov'd, but the Institution it self preserv'd, which he owns to be so very like a Divine one, that he knows of no difference: for if our Saviour's own Institution, if the Prattice of the Apostles, and of the whole Church without Contradiction for 1500 Years can make any thing of Divine Extraction, the Author thinks Episcopacy may lay a Claim to it: And therefore he desires your Lordships not to be surprized or imagine that an Enemy has done this, for as I said before, he is a Lover of the Church and of Truth, and wou'd willingly have the Pillars of it without spot or blemish; or if that Character be too high for human Imperfections, he begs your Lordships to mend those Things which give the greatest Offence and Scandal to the World, and are the greatest hindrances to the Propagation of the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, or at least to the Reformation of their Lives who profess it. And thus far the Author thought convenient humbly to address your Lordships by way of Introduction, and as an Apology for this (which he hopes will not be an Ungrateful) Undertaking.

A S E-

A
SERIOUS and HUMBLE
ADDRESS, &c.

MY LORDS,

IT is to be Observ'd and must be Acknowledged that the contempt of the Clergy is one of the most effectual Means of bringing Religion in general into Disgrace: for who would not be apt to think a Profession as slovenly as its Professors? and be tempted to think as meanly of Religion, as the World does of its Ministers? I must confess, this is not a right way of judging, tho' 'tis the common one; neither is it rational to condemn a whole Order of Men for some Mens Failures and Imperfections: all this must very readily be acknowledged by every one of the least reason and consideration, and yet by evident Experience we find the contrary to all this practised: And the reason is plain, because the generality of Men do not look into the Nature and Excellency of things, and by that give their Judgment concerning them; but according to the common Vogue they have in the World: they do not so much consider what the things are, as what People think them to be: So that if they find any thing under Disgrace and Scorn, they presently joyn in the cry, and in reality despise that and every thing else that has relation to a thing which they daily see so condemn'd and derided by others.

Thus it fares with every thing, even those things which otherwise Men could like well enough, but much more so does it fare with Religion; because that is a thing of which the generality
of

of Men have taken up wrong Notions, look on all its Precepts as so many bars and letts to their Pleasures, and are therefore glad of any opportunity to decry and debase it : And what greater can the most stubborn Atheist, or hardned Sinner wish for than the meanness and despicableness of its Clergy ?

God forbid that I should ever insinuate that ours, in the main, are in any respect despicable ; No, I dare challenge the World to shew in general either Better or more Learned than those of the Reformation : This, I believe, our most bitter Enemies will acknowledge : But then I must likewise own that there has been some Occasion given for a Censure ; for all are not of the same Character : And such is the Malice of our Adversaries, that wherever they find a Spot, they presently throw it on the whole Order ; and if one Member suffer, they will make all the Members to suffer with it.

This is certainly the Matter of Fact, and there is no arguing against Experience : Our business therefore must be to enquire where the Ground of this Contempt lies, at whose Door we must lay it, and how we may most effectually endeavour to remove it : I must own that the inveterate Malice of Atheists and Infidels is so sharp sighted as to spy Grounds of Contempt where there are none ; and for this purpose they will rack their Inventions to cast an Odium on the Ministers of the Gospel, either by mimiking their Behaviour, or aspersing their Conduct : But then, our Comfort is such a Calumny is not long-lived, for the opposite Practice will soon give the Lye to it, and discredit the Insinuation : for the generality of Men are not so ill natured and disingenuous as to believe things against their own Experience, and take a Man for a Devil, when at the same time they find him to be a Saint : There may be, and, I doubt not, are some such Monsters, but it is absurd to make the Supposition Universal. We must therefore look somewhere else for the Occasion of that contempt of the Clergy which has been so lasting, and instead of wearing or growing less in its Progress, is of a greater bulk.

The Ingenious Mr. Eachard, in his Book of *The Grounds and Occasions of the contempt of the Clergy and of Religion*, very judiciously refers it to the Ignorance of some, and the Poverty of others ; for where the Minister knows no more than his Parishioners,

ners, perhaps not so much, where he betrays his Weakness on every Occasion, and his Ignorance of Holy Things is conspicuous even among the Carters and Plowmen : and where the meanest of his Parish find themselves able to gainsay him any where but in the Pulpit where he must not be spoke to ; I cannot see how it is possible for him to gain much respect among his People : For tho' it is a Maxim among some Sects of Religion, That it is good to keep the People in Ignorance ; I never heard it recommended to the Clergy by any, but especially by any of the Reformation : If Ignorance helps a Man's Devotion, as I am sure it cannot, yet there is nothing makes him appear so little in the World : for tho' the Populacy be supposed as low in their Intellectuals as you can wish them, yet they will expect a competent degree of Knowledge in those who are to teach and direct them, and if once the weakness of their Guides is discover'd, they will be loth to trust their Salvation in their hands, and be rather apt to despise and neglect them : But this is so plain a case that it is needless to insist on it, seeing daily Experience confirms it.

As for the Poverty of the Clergy, I need say but little, because we find it despised in every one, and I never yet found that the Clergy were exempt from the common Fate of Mankind : It is impossible but that Men of small Incomes and large Families must go from House to House, not in order to fill their Parishioners with Spiritual Food, but to satisfy their own craving Appetites : and therefore must of necessity submit to such mean things as in all likelihood will render themselves contemptible to their People : For how can he be expected to rebuke his Flock with that Courage and Honesty which becomes a Clergy-Man, when he must lose a good Dinner by it, and fast for his Impertinence. Thus far I entirely acquiesce in Mr. *Eachard's* Grounds, but when he comes to the Occasion, I must as entirely dissent from him, and will leave the whole Arbitration to your Lordships.

Ignorance and Poverty are confess'd sufficient Grounds of Contempt, but at whose Door the Ignorance of the Clergy must be laid, is the Controversy : The Author I have been speaking of, ascribes it wholly to the Negligence and Carelessness of Schools and Universities; which I must own would have been right,

right, if he had spoke only of Ignorance in general ; but when he confines it to the Clergy , I must beg leave to dissent from the Hypothesis. For let Men spend never so much time in this Author's *Amo's* and *Τυπτα's* at School, and some Years as triflingly in the University ; yet I can see no reason , no necessity at all that from hence they shou'd immediately pop into the Pulpit. They may indeed , and must come some way into the World ; but sure there are several Arts besides the Ministry to employ them : And I never knew that your Lordships hands cou'd be forced against your wills upon their heads, as soon as they cou'd tell *Quid est Logica*, and *Quot sunt virtutes Morales* : I never yet heard that there lies any Action at Law , against your Lordships for not ordaining unqualified Persons , or that the Knowledge of *Burgersdicius* or *Eustachius* was more than a sufficient qualification for Holy Orders. And therefore I must be so far from laying the blame on the Schools and Universities, that, with Submission, I must beg leave to lay all the Ignorance and Poverty, and of consequence, Contempt of the Clergy wholly at your Lordships Doors. If I make this out, as I hope I shall, I beg of your Lordships to lay it heartily and seriously to your Consciences ; and since none, (as will appear hereafter) can remedy it but your Lordships, again and again I beg for the Reformation of such Abuses : for then, and not till then, will Religion flourish : and all the Contempt of Religion, all the Atheism and Infidelity as well as Immorality of the World, I doubt, (without such a Reformation) will be Charged to your Lordships in the last and terrible Day of Accounts : And therefore I humbly address your Lordships, not only for the Churches good, but your own honour likewise, that as you are intrusted with the Keys of the Church, you will admit none into it out of favour or affection ; that the Church by your careful and conscientious discharge of your Duty, may at last be stock'd with a Pious, a Painful, and a Learned Ministry.

St. Paul commands *Timothy*, and in him, all Bishops to *lay hands suddenly on no man*, 1 Tim. 5. 22 that is to be very careful and circumspect in the Ordination of fit Men for the Ministry. And then if at that time before Miracles were ceas'd, when God immediately inspired those who were to be his Ambassadors, there was required so much care in choosing fit Persons, sure I am, there

there is now more need of such a Caution. For I suppose your Lordships will not imagine that your Hands must quicken every Lump of Clay they fall on, or that God Almighty in these days has given any Promise that an Immediate and Miraculous Inspiration should flow from your Lordships Fingers. These are Thoughts I am sure that never enter'd into your Lordships, and therefore greater Care should be taken in your Ordinations: for the Welfare of the Church, the Honour of Religion, and the Salvation of Men's Souls intirely depend on it: So that I hope after such Considerations as these, I need say no more to procure your Lordships serious Attention and Consideration.

The first thing therefore I desire of your Lordships, is to consider whether there be any such thing as an ignorant Clergy-man in this Kingdom, and if there be, (as I am afraid there are too many) whether he does not only bring himself, but his whole Order, and Religion in general into Contempt and Disrepute. And I beg your Lordships to lay it to your Consciences, and after you have examined others, to examine your selves likewise, whether by your too hasty Ordinations, you be not the Occasions of all this Mischief.

Apology 1. Some People, I know, are of Opinion, that our Canons only require a good Life and a very slender Degree of Knowledge in those who enter into the Holy Function: If they have taken a Degree in any University, and can give an account of their Faith in Latin, that is, as they imagine, if they can say their Creed in Latin, they are sufficiently qualified; so that if every Man in Orders has not all that Knowledge that might be wish'd; it is the Canon, and not the Bishop must Answer for it.

Answer. I must indeed confess that the Canon, to the unwary Reader, may seem something loose in this particular: but if we search it more narrowly, we shall find it requires more Knowledge in those to be Ordain'd than the generality of People are aware of: for it requires not only an account of their Faith, but a confirmation of it, and how far that will reach I leave your Lordships to examine: But according to my Notion of things, none can be said either to give an Account of, or to

confirm the Articles of their Religion, without thoroughly understanding them, and being able to make them good against all Gainsayers : Which I am afraid not all of those who are Ordain'd are capable of : And that this is no forced Construction of the Canon, I think may be made manifest from two other Canons that follow it, viz. The 40th, and the 41st. which require Ministers to confer with Recumbents, and to visit the Sick, which I believe will be readily acknowledg'd to require no little Skill in Divinity : For Cases of Conscience which very frequently disturb Sick Men, and the Controversies of those with whom we must confer, require, in my Opinion, something more than a bare repeating of the Creed in Latin : So that, if I mistake not the Matter very much, your Lordships, and not the Canon are answerable for all the Ignorance of Clergy-men, and all the Contempt, which is the Consequence of that, notwithstanding the Objection.

Apology. 2. I have heard some People argue in behalf of your Lordships, That you Ordain, indeed, some who are not so well qualified as might be wish'd; but then they are going Chaplains to some Regiment : And others, in order to send them to Preach the Gospel in some of our Plantations.

Answer 1. But I think, with submission to your Lordships, that this is so far from softning the Matter, that the very Excuse stands in need of an Apology : For as to the first sort, those who go Chaplains to Regiments, I think they, above all Men, ought to be very well qualified, unless you will suppose them only to take the Queen's Money, without ever designing to save those Souls which are committed to their Care : Their Flock are not only generally Vicious, but Men of Sense likewise; and they never fail letting the Doctor (as they call him) know that he is more ignorant than themselves, and therefore may save his Exhortations : whereas had they a Man of Learning among them, his Parts wou'd awe them into a Respect and Value for him, and by degrees he might insensibly work on the most Atheistical Persons in the Army; which can never be done by one of little or no Understanding in Divinity : for if once the Doctor's weakness is discover'd (which can't be long conceal'd) Men of their loose Principles

Principles will be apt to conclude the Religion he Professes as weak and unguarded as himself; so that Christianity suffers through his Ignorance, and the whole Order is supposed of the same lump with the Chaplain.

I will not say that the Ignorance of the generality of Chaplains, is the only cause of the Soldiers Vices; but I am of Opinion, if it were narrowly look'd into, it would be found the Principal one: and I don't doubt but a learned, sober and discreet Ministry in those Posts, would go a great way in reforming the Abuses and Irregularities of the Army.

But besides, if they were always to stay among our selves, the Consequence would not be so very fatal; but this is not the case, no, they are sent among Strangers, who will be as sharp-sighted in spying their Ignorance as the Soldiers: Which must certainly be the concisest way of exposing the whole Order, and our Religion likewise to the Contempt and Rallery of our Adversaries abroad; which I suppose your Lordships will acknowledge to be no extraordinary good Consequence.

Answer II. And then as for those whom your Lordships design for the Plantations: I don't doubt but you have found some make use of it only as a Trick to get into the Ministry: and when they have got their end, they soon beg your Lordships to excuse them so long a Journey; and begin to think that their Ignorance is dispell'd by the imposition of your Lordships hands, and as soon as they get out of your Clutches, they fancy themselves as well qualified to Preach to the fair ones of Europe, as your Lordships: and therefore beg your Lordships to send Persons of greater Ignorance, and more desperate Fortunes, to supply their Places among the Negroes of America.

But besides, I shou'd rather think that the most Learned of the Ministry should be sent to the Plantations. And I cannot imagine that your Lordships suppose Ignorance a fit Instrument to Convert *Barbarians*: Sure I am, the Religion of the Ever-blessed Jesus is not likely to meet with much repute in those Foreign Parts when we send such to Propagate it who cannot give an Account of their own Catechism: and if there must be a Conversion, I am afraid, at this rate the *Barbarians* are more likely to convert the *Christians*; or at least, the *En-*

mies of the Cross of Christ, will be found more obstinate and tenacious of their Errors: All which I must beg your Lordships to lay to your Consciences, and for the future not to be so very lavish of your good Graces.

Apology 3. It is urged by others, That 'tis none of your Lordships faults if some be ordain'd who are not duly qualified, but rather those Universities that give them their Degrees: for it is to be supposed that they know their Qualifications best who have had time enough to examine them both as to their Intellectuals and Morals: If therefore they will not only give them their Degrees, but recommend them also by their Testimoniums; they, and not the Bishops are to answer for it: and the reason is, because the Canon only requires them to be Twenty three Years of Age, and Graduates in some University: for the giving an Account of their Faith in Latin, is look'd on by the Canon as a less Qualification than having taken their Degrees.

Answer. I must confess that this is the most plausible Apology which has been urged in behalf of your Lordships, but upon a serious Reflection I can't think it carries very much weight along with it: for it cannot be supposed that any one's Negligence can be a just Excuse for your Lordships Remissness in your Duty; and it is so lame, so thin an Objection that it needs but one glance to see through it; so that I am perswaded your Lordships are wiser than to insist on't.

This Consideration indeed makes it highly necessary, that the Provost and Fellows of Every University, shou'd take more Care how they confer Degrees, since it is so near a Step to the Desk, and so small a one from that to the Pulpit: They shou'd consider what a Mischief it is to the Church, since 'tis made a Pretext at least for Holy Orders, and some we find by Experience struggle hard for it, meerly because they think it the best Qualification for the Ministry: I wou'd therefore desire the Gentlemen of the University not to Compliment any one with their Degrees, but such as they are convinc'd are qualified: for besides the Injury to the Publick, there can be no greater Disgrace to the House it self, than Ignorant Graduates: their own Interest

is but small and inconsiderable, but the Damage to the Nation is great; and therefore how they can excuse themselves in giving Degrees in so many Instances (as I cou'd mention) of Ignorance and Folly I can't imagine.

It is the usual Custom, I know, in these Cases to stop such of their Degrees who have been very Idle, and inclined to Vice; for one Commencement, and give it them the next, tho' they are every whit as ignorant as they were before, and are never likely to be otherwise: It is ungrateful to give Instances of this Nature, tho' many might be produced; but thus much I must say, that it gives a very great Offence, and if I cou'd, I wou'd willingly find something to say in their Justification.

But I am afraid that many even of those who take their Degrees in the due time, make but very awkward Figures when they come into the World, and are fit rather to go to School, than to come out of an University: for I wou'd fain know how many in a Year, nay in Seven Years, are quite hindred of their Degrees, who are able to pay the Fees, and willing to take them: I believe the Number will be found but very small upon Computation, perhaps not one in a Hundred: I am loth to reflect on the superficial Acts in the Hall, and the Mock-examination in the Regent-house: they are sufficient, I must own of themselves to try any Man, but as they are managed, the most ignorant may perform them: I wou'd not, by this, be thought to design any Affront or Disgrace to the University whereof I own my self a Member: It is my *Alma Mater*, and I wou'd willingly have it flourish and be an honour to the Nation, and send none into the World, at least with any marks of her Favour, but such as may be Ornaments to Church and State: Nor to give her Degrees, even *Speciali Gratia*, or for God's Sake, to any, but Men of Merit and Industry: For we find that a Degree whenever taken, or under what Form soever, is made a Step to Holy Orders: And out of a numberless heap of Instances which might be given, a very late one shall suffice for a Proof of the Assertion.

Thus far, my Lords, I must acknowledge the Universities are in fault, and I pray God both for their own, and the Honour of the Nation, that they may take more Care for the time to come; but however, as I said before, I can't see how this can be any Excuse for your Lordships; for I know of no necessary connexion between

between your Lordships Hands and the Vice-Chancellor's, that as soon as his are off, yours shou'd be on the Heads of those Young and sometimes *Speciali-gratia* Graduates.

(1.) *Can.* I was always of Opinion, that your Lordships, and not the University, were to Answer for your own Actions, and to Judge of Mens qualifications who are to Serve at the Altar: This was thought so very Necessary in former Days, that the Bishops and Clergy of the Council in *Trullo*, (1.) look'd on it as their Duty to make a Canon to that Purpose; That if any Bishop or Clergy-man were Ordain'd without a sufficient tryal, both the Ordainer and the Ordained were to be deposed: Which Canon I beg your Lordships seriously to consider.

20. I know it is the Method of some of your Lordships to have a Publick Examination before your Ordination, which I must needs commend and approve of: But then, when I consider how few are put by who scarce Answer a Word even at those easie Examinations; and those few that are, seldom miss it the next Ordination, or at least never miss of some other Bishop who is not so nice and Critical, I cannot see where or how the matter is mended: I cou'd never understand how a meer Form can do any good: It may indeed for a while be a sort of Bug-bear and Scare-crow till Men become familiar with it, and find it without a Sting: but it can never Answer the end proposed, viz. make Men learned. And I must needs own that I see very many Ordained, even by those who pretend to be so nice and terrible, no better qualified than other Men: And the reason is plain, because the Ordination is generally designed for some one Favourite, and then others cannot be denied, without Injustice, who will stand the tryal of the same Examination, and (as they may very easily be) are every whit as well qualified; so that all together crowd under his Lordship's sacred hands along with the Favourite, and find themselves of a sudden inlightned with him, so that, no doubt, they will do Wonders, when they mount into the Pulpit.

Thus far I thought it adviseable to consider all the Apologies which ever I heard in Vindication of your Lordships, and I think have sufficiently evinc'd that they can be no just Excuses for your Lordships, in relation to the Ignorance of the Clergy.

But

But I would willingly go a little further, and expostulate with your Lordships, whether you always come up even to these fruitless Apologies.

And first of all I would ask your Lordships whether you always enquire into the Age of those who are to be Ordain'd, whether you are certain they are all as old as the Canon requires; or whether one in Twenty are of full Age? But I know it will be retorted, by some malicious Lay-man, what if they be not? Is there not such a thing as a Dispensation to be had, which shall make the meekest Boy old enough for the best Preferments? Can you give any one instance of a Favourite or Relation that ever lost a good Living for want of Age, when a fair opportunity offer'd? My Niece's Husband has a greater Ascendant over his Lordship than this comes to, and then what signifies your Canon in this particular? These, my Lords, are Questions which I have been often ask'd, and have been as often puzzled at: I beg therefore of your Lordships to answer for me as soon as possible, and satisfy the World in this difficulty: for I must needs own that I can see no reason why a Boy should be qualified to instruct Men, who is scarcely able to Catechize Children, merely because he is some Bishop's or Nobleman's Relation, and so can get a Dispensation to wear a Band and a Callock: He may perhaps have learn'd so much of Arithmetick as to reckon his Income; But it is impossible he can have so much Divinity, as is required in a Preacher of the Gospel: but you will say that time will mend that fault: their Age, I must confess it will, but not their Head: for it is very unlikely that any one who is so soon enter'd into the World, should improve his own, or his Parishioners Judgments: He may Preach them a Sermon upon the Fruits of the Earth, how Tythes are set, and what rate Cattle bears, &c. but will hardly be able to read them a Sound Lecture in Divinity; which must needs give a very great Offence and Scandal to the World, and calls loudly for your Lordships Reformation. The Primitive Church which was nearer the Miraculous Age of the Apostles than ours is, admitted of no Dispensations that I cou'd ever hear of, tho' their Canons required many more Years for the Presbiter, than ours do: for where our's (which are very far remov'd from either Miracles or Inspiration) requires Twenty four Years,

Years, theirs required Five and thirty : So that I would have your Lordships seriously to examine what reasonable Apologies can be made for such Dispensations.

And in the mean time, not to insist on this Topick any longer, I would seriously ask your Lordships in the second place, and put it tenderly to your Consciences, whether you never Ordain any one unless he has taken a Degree in some University? I would desire your Lordships to consider whether Tradesmen and Soldiers, Gentlemen Ushers, &c. have not crowded into the Church without ever taking a Degree, and whether this be answerable either to your own Reason or the Churches Constitution? Is it not a shame to see every Profession empty it self into the Altar? We have seen the Parlour and the Dressing-room, and at this rate, I doubt not, we shall see the Kitchen likewise rush into the Ministry: It is a good easie way of recompencing the past Services of those about you, but how easily it will sit on your Lordships Consciences I will not determine: but I would desire your Lordships to consider what a Damage it brings to the Church, and what a Scandal to Religion. *P. Siricius* was so sensible of this Abuse, that writing to the Bishop of *Tarragon*, (2) he speaks against it with abundance of Salt, and wonders that any one should Ordain out of partial Affection. And *Celestine* in his Letters to the Bishops of the Provinces of *Vienna* and *Narbon* (3) in *France*, complains that Men were promoted even to be Bishops, without going through other Degrees, and that some of the worst of the Laity were Ordained. To the same purpose does *Nazienzen's* Son, in his Oration on the Memory of *St. Basil*, lament that many were ordain'd on a sudden without passing through previous Degrees, contrary to the custom of all other Professions and Arts: so that he was afraid lest the holiest of all Orders should become the most ridiculous, while Bishopricks (meaning I suppose the Ministry in general) were not attain'd by Vertue, but wickedness, and not the Worthiest but the Mightiest were advanc'd to those Seats. (4) And I desire your Lordships to consider with what vehemence and tartness Pope *Innocent* wrote against those who Ordain'd Secular Men without going through previous Degrees. (5) Nay, the Abuses began to be so notorious, that it being represented to *Arcadius* the Emperour, that many left their Employments, and turn'd Clergymen, he made a Law in the Year 398, that those who were to be Ordain'd, should be

(2) *Epist.* 3. c. 1.

(3) *Ce. Ep.* 2.
c. 3. 5.

(4) *Nazi. Works*,
Orat. 20.

(5) *Juner. Ep.* 2.
c. 11. *Ep.* 4. c.
3. 5.

be chosen out of Monasteries (which were much the same with our Colleges) and not taken from another State of Life, that so none might be Ordain'd but such as were well try'd (6). And whether our Church stands in need of such a Law, I leave the World and your Lordships to examine: Nay, (however the contrary practice may now prevail) it was thought, not many Years ago, a Crime not to be punish'd with too much Severity: for one of the greatest Crimes urg'd against Dr. *Lemuel Matthews* in the Regal Visitation held at *Lisburn*, where three Reverend Prelates were Judges, was, that he prevail'd with his aged Bishop to admit one, who had for some time been a Menial Servant of his own, into Holy Orders: we all know how severely this, among other things then alledged against him, remains punish'd to this Day.

(6) *Cod. Theod.
de Episc. &
Presb. Tit. 2.
li. 32.*

So that thus far I may justly presume, that, notwithstanding all the Apologies which have been made for your Lordships, the Ignorance and want of such Qualifications as are requisite in the Clergy, and consequently all the Contempt and Scorn our Religion meets withal on that account, is wholly chargeable on your Lordships: The design therefore of this Address is to desire you to reflect on these things, to lay them seriously to your Consciences, and then the Author doubts not but your Lordships will be more strict in your Examinations, more backward in your Ordinations, and the Church will in time be fill'd with a learned and well-qualified Ministry: When your Lordships forbear rewarding your own and others Servants at the Churches cost, and resolve to lay your hands on none out of favour or affection, it is to be hoped that the Ministers of the Gospel will indeed be, what they ought, burning and shining Lights, such Lights as shall direct the most ignorant and obstinate, in the Way to Heaven: And till this be done, 'till Nepotism, &c. be laid aside, we shall never see Religion flourish as it ought, but Interest and Faction will take place of Vertue and Merit, to the great Disgrace of the Gospel of our Blessed Saviour; all which I once more beg of your Lordships seriously to consider.

And in the mean time the Author will go on to make good his 2d Charge, *viz.* That your Lordships are not only chargeable with the Ignorance, but likewise with the Poverty of the Clergy, and all that Contempt and Scorn which Religion meets withal on that Score.

That Poverty is in every condition of Life, despised, I have already prov'd, and I believe will be easily consented to by your

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Lordships;

Lordships; and I must also suppose it will be as readily acknowledged that the Numbers of the Clergy is the chief, if not the only occasion of their Poverty: for we find by Experience that the more there are of any Art or Profession, the Poorer they grow, they can't all get Employments, and of consequence must beg or starve; and I know of no Law which exempts the Clergy from the fate of other Professions; nay, we find by Experience that as they grow in Numbers, they diminish in their Fortunes, and become the Sport and Scorn of their Enemies.

Now the reason of all this is plain; for those Livings which had, before, several Denominations, and which altogether made up but a slender competency, must either now be divided to make room for other Clergy-men, or which is much worse, the greatest part of the Clergy must beg or Starve. And indeed after all, these Divisions themselves wont mend the matter: for I am confident, if an exact Computation were made, we shou'd find at least Fifty new Clergy-men ordain'd, for one that dies; so that unless a Living can at least be divided into fifty Parts when an Incumbent dies, and every Part be a sufficient competency for a Clergy-man and his Family, I cannot see any thing but Poverty and Misery, Contempt and Scandal among the Clergy: For we will suppose every Parish in this Kingdom, one with another, to be worth Five hundred Pounds a Year: Now it is plain, according to the former Computation, if it be divided among as many as are Ordain'd, and are Unprovided for, when an Incumbent dies, then every Clergy-man will have Ten Pounds a Year for the Maintenance of himself and Family: which I suppose, neither the World nor your Lordships, will think a sufficient Maintenance: And if the Living be given to any one single Person, then the other Forty nine may shift for themselves.

Now I have supposed Fifty Person's Ordain'd for one that dies, which perhaps you will say is too large a Supposition; well then to comply with your Lordships, let us suppose but Twenty, which I am sure is too small a Computation; it will then amount but to Twenty five Pounds a Year, each Man, and that too supposing every Parish worth Five hundred Pounds yearly; but if we suppose each Living worth but Two hundred Pounds, which I am sure will be found much too large a Supposition, then it will come to the same Computation, as before, and so every Clergy-
man

man will have Ten Pounds a Year for his Subsistence, or the greatest part must beg, which is a very melancholy Consideration: and if your Lordships continue to Ordain according to this Computation, it will be much more advantageous to wait in the Street for an Alms, than to wait on the Altar: Nay, a very few Years will reduce the Livings into less than Potatoe-Gardens, and the greatest Part must have nothing, notwithstanding all the Divisions and Sub-divisions which your Lordships can possibly make in every Parish: Thus far I am sure I am right, and it is nothing but what the World who think at all, do observe and bemoan.

Nay, the very Satyrist cou'd not but perswade his Friend from taking Orders, and gives this reason, among others, for it. (7)

(7) Oldham's Poems, Pag. 136.

*The Church is grown so overstock'd of late,
That if you walk Abroad you'll hardly meet
More Porters now than Parsons in the Street.
At Every Corner they are forc'd to ply
For Jobs of hawking Divinity:
And half the Number of the Sacred Herd
Are fain to strowl and wander Unprefer'd.*

I mention this only to let your Lordships see what an Offence and Scandal the great Numbers of Unprovided Clergy have given to the World; So that it is hoped your Lordships, by keeping off your hands, will, for the time to come, remedy this which has brought such a Contempt and Infamy on the Clergy. I need not tell you what mean and pitiful Spirits are entail'd upon Poverty: how Men that have but light Pockets, will cringe and fawn, and fall down to a Man of Fortune; and what contempt and slight, not only the Clergy, but Religion meets withall, on this account is too apparent: But this is so ungrateful a Topick that I care not for insisting on it; but will leave it to your Lordships seriously to reflect on, and to ask your Consciences whether your Lordships be not the sole and only occasion of it, by bringing such crowds into the Clergy.

There was indeed a time when the Vintage cou'd not be got in for want of Labourers; for our blessed Saviour tells his Disciples, that *the Harvest was plenteous but the Labourers few*, and then

he bids them *pray the Lord of the Harvest, that he would send forth Labourers into the Harvest*, Matt. 9. 37, 38. But then we must observe, that it was a time of Persecution, and it was the condition of the Gospel, that whoever undertook to propagate it, must likewise lay down his life for it; and if he had any thing to part withal, he was to distribute it among those who were poor and distress'd: And I believe if this was now the condition of those who shou'd Preach the Gospel, we shou'd still have reason to pray the Lord of the Harvest, that he wou'd send forth Labourers into his Harvest.

But this was not the case very many Years, for when Christianity was settled on the Imperial Throne, and the fiery tryal of Persecution and Martyrdom was over; the Revenue of the Clergy began to be settled, and then they began too, to crowd into the Church, some out of Covetousness, others out of Ambition, to have Rule and Dominion, and some to be exempted from other Services of the Empire; so that Men were as forward to be Ordain'd, as the Bishops were to lay hands on them: Until *Constantine* the Great, the very first Christian Emperour, seeing the Church so over-stock'd, and the Clergy-men beginning to eat up and devour one another, and grow scandalous by the Poverty which was occasioned by their Numbers, and seeing likewise that so many, under pretence of Serving at the Altar were exempted from Serving the immediate Necessities of the State, made a Law, directed to *Ablavius*, to restrain the great Numbers of those who enter'd into Orders, and that none shou'd be Ordain'd but in the room of those that died (8). And for the very same reason, the great Council of *Chalcedon* made an expresse Canon to the same purpose, which annuls all Ordinations, in which there was not a Designation of a particular Place joyn'd with them (9), and this likewise is the Practice of the Church of *Scotland* to this day; and this no doubt was the design of the Thirtieth Canon of the Church of *Ireland*; nay, the Preamble of the same Canon of the Church of *England*, from which ours was copied, plainly gives this Account of it, that it was design'd to prevent the great Number of Clergy-men (10) a good intent, no doubt, but how well observ'd I leave your Lordships to examine.

Your Lordships I know will say, that there are assisting Curates, as well as other Ministers to be Ordain'd, and that the Canon

(8) *Cod. Theod. de Episc. & Presb. Tit. 2. li. 6.*

(9) *Coun. Chalcedon. Can. 6.*

(10) *Sparrow's Can. pag. 285.*

Canon admits such into Holy Orders, and that these are they which make so great a bulk among the Clergy : All this I very readily acknowledge, and there is a Necessity there shou'd be such ; but then the Canon also requires that whatsoever Curateship they are admitted to, they shall not be remov'd thence 'till they are otherwise provided for : except by their notable evil carriage they deserve the contrary : which part of the Canon is seldom observ'd.

For I wou'd willingly ask your Lordships, why shou'd not the Curate who has serv'd the Cure of the Parish many Years, be admitted into the Benefice when the Incumbent dies ? Do your Lordships in your Consciences think him qualified to serve it for another Man ? If you do not, why then did you Ordain him, or give him a Licence ? If you do, what shou'd hinder him from serving for himself ? Do you think he has not Arithmetick enough to reckon his Money when he is to receive it ? Or let us know what other Qualification he stands in need of ; as for the Preaching part of the Cure, he has already perform'd it, and perhaps to the Satisfaction of those that heard him ; and if he cou'd visit the Sick in the Incumbent's life-time, he is certainly as well qualified to do it, now the Incumbent is dead : So that he is either qualified in every respect for such a Parish, or your Lordships have not acted with so much Conscience as you ought to do, in admitting a Person to serve a Cure, whom you do not think capable of Serving it : Whatever side of the Dilemma your Lordships will be pleas'd to take, I humbly conceive, it will bring no very great Credit to your Lordships.

But the truth of the Matter is, the Curate, tho' he may be a better and more deserving Man, is not so great a Favourite as the Husband of my Lord the Bishop's Niece, &c. or the Person who comes recommended by a Person of Quality : I won't say there is any thing else in the case, for fear of giving too great an offence to your Lordships : and because perhaps I cannot directly make Affidavit of any other Irregularities : but thus far every day's Experience tells us, that a Favourite or Relation prevails, when the justice of the friendless Curate's cause is neglected : and when an other
Person

Person jumps over the Curate's head, 'tis ten to one but the Curate is removed, contrary to the design and the express words of the Canon. Indeed were the Curates provided for in their turns, as opportunity offer'd, did not every Upstart who has the good luck to be a Relation, or Friend, take away his right, there might be some hopes, some prospect of Preferment; but as things are now managed by Friends and Interest, I can see no hopes the poor Curate can pretend to, who relies only on his Merit and Industry.

But to pass this by, I wou'd ask your Lordships, whether none be Ordain'd but such as have Titles? Are none Ordain'd but when there is occasion for them? If this can't be said, I don't see any thing that can reasonably be urged in your Lordships behalf for Ordaining them.

I have heard it said that your Lordships in this case Ordain, as some People eat, only out of wantonness, or to shew that you have such a Power; for it is usual they say, for a young Bishop to hanſel his Episcopal habit with a bulky Ordination: Some say again, that you do it to bring Money into your Servants Pocket, as a sample of the plentiful Harvest they are likely to have in your Lordships Service: (which by the by, is a very odd way of proceeding, to enrich your Attendants, at the Churches ruine) And others are apt to say, you do it that you may have the more Clergy-men under Subjection, that so by dividing of Livings and multiplying Gown-men, you may likewise humble them, and so make your selves, in every respect, Lords over God's heritage: But these are Reasons which carry something so Unnatural, as well as Ungrateful along with them, that I will not insist on them: but will give another Reason why your Lordships Ordain so many without Titles, contrary to the Canon, and that is, because you can't resist the Importunities of some great Men who solicit you: Your Lordships Constitutions are very pliable and easily wrought on, so that you do not know how to deny those so small a Favour, to whom perhaps you owe your own Preferment. How far either the World, or your Lordships Consciences, on more mature Thoughts will approve of this, or any of the above Reasons, I cannot tell; but however, I will venture, without any further Reflection,

tion, to leave it to your Lordships candid and impartial Examination.

Your Lordships will perhaps say, What is it to any one whom or how many you Ordain : you can but incur the Penalty of the Canon ; and if you do that, it is ill Manners and Impertinence for any to find fault with your Proceedings. But the Author desires your Lordships to keep your temper, and stifle your Resentments, that the World as well as your Selves may be Arbitrators.

Your Lordships say, you can but incur the Penalty of the Canon when you act contrary to it : which is, that you keep and maintain those whom you so Ordain with all things Necessary, 'till you do prefer them to some Ecclesiastical Livings : Now if this were exacted, I doubt not, your Lordships wou'd soon Petition for larger Salaries ; for I don't see how the Incomes of your Bishopricks wou'd do it, let their Maintenance be as Poor as it cou'd be : or indeed if there was a sufficient Fund to do it, I'm afraid it wou'd be a very sorry Maintenance they must expect from your Lordships : their Gowns and Cassocks wou'd be soon chang'd into another sort of Livery, they wou'd save the Wages of other Servants ; and the Stable and the Kitchen wou'd be serv'd with Spiritual Attendants : If this was not the case, I'm afraid your Lady wou'd look askew on them, when she saw them eating the Bread out of the Mouths of her Children.

But suppose your Lordships shou'd refuse them a necessary Maintenance, as no doubt you wou'd, if they demanded it ; Cou'd the young Priests sue you for Children's Portion ? or what cou'd they do in such an Exigence ? Why truly, the Canon only ties up your hands for Twelve Months, (after which they are as loose as ever) without making any other Provision for the young Clergy-men : Now I wou'd desire to know what good wou'd your Lordships Suspension from Ordination do those you had Ordained before ? It may be a sort of Mortification to your Lordships, but I am sure it will add nothing to the Support of those you have Ordained : neither will the Church reap any Advantage by it ; So that unless your Lordships will use a little Conscience, and Ordain none but when there is occasion, I can't see any thing to prevent the Ruine both of the Church and Clergy. And !

And thus I think I have prov'd even to a Demonstration, that all the contempt which either the Clergy, or Religion meets withal on their account, is wholly chargeable on your Lordships Conduct, and can never be remedied 'till your Lordships will resolve to Ordain none either out of favour or affection; none but such as are duely qualified for so great an Undertaking, and not such neither, unless there be an occasion and necessity for them: that so we may have no strowling Mendicant Clergy men among us; but that all may live well and creditably, to the honour of the Church by Law establish'd, to the Silencing of our Enemies, and to the good and Eternal Salvation of Mens Souls.

There is another Cause of that Contempt of the Clergy by which Religion also suffers, and which some will be apt to say is wholly owing to the Clergy themselves, viz. the ill Lives of a great many of them.

That this has been made a cause of Atheism and Infidelity, of Prophaneness and Immorality, must readily be acknowledged; It is I confess very difficult for Men of strong Passions, and sensual Inclinations, to believe a God, when they see those who press this Article of our Creed in their Sermons, deny it in their Actions: It is not easie for such Men to conquer their unruly Lusts, and live according to the Precepts of Religion, when they see the Lives of some of the Clergy, give the lye to their Profession: They rather conclude from hence that Religion is a Cheat, and a Politick Invention, so that they may make bold with it as well as their Teachers.

Tho' this be a very thin Argument for Infidelity, yet it is, I must confess the common one, as the late Earl of Rochester on his Death-bed asserted, (11) He told the then Doctor Burnet, That there was nothing which gave him and many others, a more secret Encouragement in their Ill Ways, than that those who pretended to believe, lived so that they could not be thought to be in earnest, when they said it. The Aspirings that he had observ'd at Court of some of the Clergy, with the servile ways they took to attain to Preferment, and the Animosities of those of several Parties about trifles, made him often think they suspected the things were not true, which in their Sermons and Discourses they so earnestly recommended.

Now

(11) Some Passages of the Life and Death of the Earl of Rochester, Pag. 120. and 121.

Now all this being acknowledged, that the ill Lives of some of the Clergy is of the most fatal Consequence to Religion, the Question will be, where we are to look for the Fountain of this Evil, and what Method can be used to prevent it.

The Immediate cause of Evil in every Man, is his own corrupt Will; when he is drawn away of his own Lust and enticed; and nothing can cure this Distemper but the Grace of God, co-operating with a Man's honest Endeavours and hearty Resolutions.

But then if we consider Men, as Clergy-men, I believe a great part of their ill Lives, will be owing to their Ignorance and Poverty, both of which I have, I think with Justice, laid to your Lordships Charge. For if we look into the World, we shall find that Vice in a great measure owes its quiet possession of Mens hearts to their Ignorance and Inconsideration: it reigns undisturbedly only in unthinking Breasts: and I am verily perswaded, if your Lordships wou'd Ordain none but such as were before remarkable both for their Piety and Learning, as the Canon requires, we shou'd have no very great reason to complain of the Clergy's Immorality: for it is constantly almost experienc'd that those Men who are most Vicious in their Intellectuals, are so likewise in their Morals: And I dare be confident that very few, on a strict Search, wou'd be found Ill Men, who are not Ignorant Men, and not so well qualified, as they ought to be for the Ministry: So that if your Lordships will continue to Ordain such Numbers out of favour and affection, if you will suffer Men, without a tryal to slip through your Fingers into the World, I can see no hopes of a Reformation.

And that likewise because of their Poverty, for where a light Pocket, and a shallow Brain meet together, 'tis great odds but they will tempt the Man to a thousand Irregularities: The very wisest Men have been afraid of, and have pray'd heartily against the Temptation: so that no wonder if the worst of Temptations, in such a Case, shou'd catch Men of weak Understandings: Such Men are expos'd to all the little tricks and shifts that Sharpers are put upon to get a Maintenance; and it is no easie matter to resist an Evil, when a craving Stomach

is the secret Orator that pushes him on, and a plentiful Dinner is the alluring Bait that invites him : But I need not insist on these things any longer, being too notorious to the least Critical Observer : since therefore your Lordships are the only occasion of the Numbers of the Clergy, and since their Numbers is the Foundation of their Want, all the ill Consequences which attend it, must necessarily be laid to your Lordships charge : so that your Lordships will be answerable for all the Contempt which the Clergy meet withal, and for all the Scoffing and Buffoonry which, on their Account, is thrown on Religion, by Atheists and Infidels : And what a frightful Figure this will make in the Day of Judgment, I leave your Lordships seriously to consider.

The Conclusion.

Thus, my Lords, I have laid before you, with all the Candour and Sincerity imaginable, the unhappy Causes of our Churches decay ; which is the Contempt and Scorn our Clergy meet withall : And if in speaking to this Argument, Truth has made me press too hard upon your Lordships, I desire it may not be look'd on as such an unpardonable Crime, as not to be admitted to make an Apology.----But indeed I think it wants none, this whole Address being design'd for the common good of Christianity, and of the Church of God in these Kingdoms.

I am not conscious of any Falshood in these Papers ; I don't know that I have been mistaken, or have drawn any wrong consequence in favour of my Cause : If I have, I desire your Lordships to set me right, to let me see my Errour as soon as possible, and I promise your Lordships to confess my Fault, and give you as publick and ample Satisfaction as you can desire : But
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if your Lordships will be silent in this Affair, you must give me leave to think I am in the right, and to beg of your Lordships, as you value your own Souls, as well as the Churches good, to *Lay hands suddenly on no man*, not to overstock the Church, that being the readiest way to make the Clergy Scandalous: not to Ordain Men out of Favour or Affection, nor to let any worldly Considerations get the Ascendant of your Consciences: but to consider that you are the Overseers of the Church, and must give a severe Account to God for its Miscarriage.

I desire your Lordships to consider what Answer you can make either to God or your own Consciences, when you stand at the Judgment Seat of Christ, for admitting Persons who have been wholly unqualified, to Serve at the Altar; to the great Prejudice of Religion, and the Ruine of Men's Souls: Can you imagine that their being your Lordships Friends or Relations, and that this was the cheapest and easiest Way of providing for them, will lighten your Accounts, and be a sufficient Apology? None of these Excuses will be current in the Court of Heaven: Our Saviour when his Relations sent to speak with him, and, no doubt, expected his *first and his greatest* favours, told the Multitude who acquainted him with it, that he had no Relations, but those that deserv'd the favour of God by their Obedience: *For, says he, whosoever shall do the will of God, the same is my brother, and sister and mother.* Mark 3. 35. This is the Pattern your Lordships must follow in conferring your Favours; None must claim Kindred to the Church of Christ, and Serve at his Altar, but those who are effectually recommended by their Merit and Industry. And when once a Man's good Qualifications become the best Interest, there will then be no great danger

danger of overstocking the Church; but we shall in all likelihood gain Credit and Reputation; silence the strongest Objections of our Adversaries; and be, as we really ought to be, both the Salt of the Earth, and the Light of the World: 'tis then Religion wou'd flourish, and we might expect the happiest Effects of such a Ministry in the Lives and Conversations of Men: But 'till your Lordships take these things into Consideration, and effectually reform them, we must expect to see all things go backward, Atheism and Infidelity increase, and Religion despised and derided, and all this by your Lordships fault: which I desire your Lordships seriously to lay to your Consciences: And which is all from

Your Lordships most Dutiful Son

and Obedient Servant

Anonymus.

FINIS.